

EVALUATION OF ZONING CONSIDERATIONS

TO: Lafayette Zoning Commission

FROM: Department of Planning, Zoning, and Codes

CASE: ZON2005-024 Sign Text Change

DATE: March 20, 2006

GENERAL INFORMATION

APPLICANT: Lafayette City-Parish Council

REQUESTED ACTION: Adopt revised sign regulations for the City of Lafayette

ZONING CONSIDERATIONS:

History of Request

In early 2005, the Lafayette City-Parish Council adopted an ordinance that limited the heights of signs for integrated business centers, such as shopping centers and office parks, to 30 feet. During discussion of the ordinance, members of the Council requested that the Zoning Commission consider height restrictions for all business signs.

The Commission held a public hearing and recommended Council approval of an ordinance that would limit all new on-premise signs in all zoning districts to 30 feet in height.

At the Council's May 2005 public hearing, representatives of the sign industry expressed concerns that the change would have negative impacts. Their concerns included traffic safety and potential difficulty locating businesses. Council discussion included members' requests that additional amendments be proposed; that sign business owners be given the opportunity for input; and that the Council be provided with a copy of the Carencro sign ordinance and information regarding sign heights permitted in Baton Rouge. Additional amendments in the attached draft include:

- Permitting only monument style signs in most areas;
- Establishing a deadline for compliance; and
- Extending the regulations to unincorporated areas of Lafayette Parish.

Research and Analysis

The Zoning staff has researched sign regulations of not only Baton Rouge and Carencro, but communities around the country that have worked toward improving the appearance of their cities and reducing visual clutter and distractions to motorists, while still providing opportunities for businesses to attract patrons through signage. Approaches to sign regulation vary widely; however, the amendments suggested by Lafayette City-Parish Council members are generally

supported by ordinances in many progressive cities. These are summarized in the attachment to this report titled “Summary of Selected Sign Regulations”.

Proposed Amendments

A full draft of amendments to the “Signs” Section of the Lafayette Zoning Ordinance is attached, along with a copy of the existing section and a comparison of the two. Major amendments proposed are:

- Extend applicability to unincorporated areas of Lafayette Parish
- Limit Sign Heights:
 - Monument signs with 10-foot maximum height
 - Exception: Pole signs with 30-foot maximum height within 500 feet of an Interstate Highway (same as Louisiana Avenue/I-10 Overlay District)
- Require that non-conforming signs comply in seven years
 - Provide an exception for “Landmark” Signs
 - Designated by Lafayette Preservation Commission
- Permit replacement of off-site signs under certain conditions
 - On same lot
 - Within 100’ of sign being replaced

In addition to these major changes, the draft includes further amendments that seek to update and provide consistency in the presentation of regulations in each zoning district. These amendments include:

- Reformatting
- Combining regulations for B-1-M and B-1-O
- Provide calculation for maximum size of signs:
 - Size of sign/s permitted based on frontage along street where sign is located
- Update and clarify list of prohibited Signs:
 - Specify product-specific, mirrored surfaces, smoke or noise emissions, wind blown, etc.
- Reintroduce “Off-Site” sign regulations:
 - Require annual inventory with \$40 per sign annual inspection fee

Preliminary Meetings with Sign Professionals and Business Representatives

The Zoning staff met informally with representatives of the business community and the sign industry to preview the proposed amendments. We received both support and constructive criticism. Comments are summarized on the attachment titled “Comments from Business and

Sign Industry Representatives”. In a further effort to inform the community, we also met with representatives of local newspapers and television stations.

ZONING STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The Zoning staff believes that the attached draft of amendments to the Lafayette Zoning Ordinance, Article IV, Section 6 – Signs, represents a positive step toward improving the appearance of signage along streets and roadways. It should also provide safety benefits for motorists by reducing visual clutter and distractions from attention-grabbing signs.

We appreciate the interest the community has shown in this proposal to date, and would welcome additional comments and suggestions. To that end, before asking the Commission to make its formal recommendation of amendments to the City-Parish Council, we recommend that the Commission table this request until its next regularly scheduled meeting, April 17.

OTHER DOCUMENTS:

SIGNS – Proposed
SIGNS – Comparison – Current/Proposed
SIGNS – Current
Comments on Proposed Changes
Summary of Selected Sign Regulations